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Clarke, J. H.





# FIELD SPORTS,

&c. &c.

Of the Native Inhabitants

OF

## NEW SOUTH WALES ;

WITH TEN PLATES,

BY THE AUTHOR.

DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION, TO

*Rear Admiral Bligh,*

LATE CAPTAIN GENERAL, & GOVERNOR IN CHIEF, IN & OVER HIS MAJESTY'S  
COLONY OF

NEW SOUTH WALES AND ITS DEPENDENCIES.

LONDON :

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1813.



TO

REAR ADMIRAL BLIGH,

Late Captain-General, and Governor-in-Chief, in and over His Majesty's  
Colony of New South Wales, and its Dependencies.

SIR,

*IT is presumed, this slight Sketch of the Manners of the  
Natives of New South Wales, may assist in keeping alive the recollection of  
a distant spot, where your exertions for your country, and for the benefit  
of mankind, have been so eminently displayed.—It also affords an opportu-  
nity for me to express my very sincere respect.*

*I am, SIR,*

*Your much obliged and humble Servant,*

***John Heaviside Clark.***





S K E T C H  
OF THE  
*MANNERS, PURSUITS, &c.*  
OF THE  
**Natives of New South Wales.**

PARTS of the vast Continent of New Holland have been discovered as early as 1616, by Dutch adventurers; but the Eastern, the part to which this Sketch refers, was first known to the celebrated British navigator, Cook, in 1770, since which it has been called New South Wales. It extends from the north point of New Holland in latitude 10 deg. 37 min. to the south, in latitude 43 deg. 39 min. and from the 135th degree of east longitude from Greenwich. The climate of New South Wales is temperate and healthy, the soil is various, and abounds with sand or clay in different ranges in the colony. The scenery has a sameness of character; and, except in the smaller evergreens, little to delight the eye. The general appearance of the woods is sombre, although the forest trees shed their bark annually, which for a time gives their immense trunks a whitish hue. On quitting the parts where the European cultivator has commenced his work of industry, the forests appear an im-

passable barrier of lofty trees, whose trunks are closely interwoven with shrubs and underwood, and cover immense hills, interspersed with breaks, where the fire of the natives has occasionally ravaged. The precipices are frightful; but, where the rude hand of nature has, for ages, been forming the ravine, the prospects are tremendous.

The aboriginal inhabitants differ, in several characteristics, from any other people hitherto known. They are slight, and tolerably well made; instances of deformity being very rare. They are from 5 feet 4 to 5 feet 9 inches high; the women are not so tall, or so well formed, as the men; they have, generally, projecting brows, broad noses, wide mouths, and thick lips, but preferable to the African negro in proportion, as the countenance approaches the European form. Their hair is short, strong, and curly, but not woolly; and, as they have no method of cleaning or combing, it becomes thick, matted, and filthy. Their skin is smeared with the fat of animals, and covered with dirt of every description; indeed, they are such strangers to every idea of cleanliness, that the true colour of their skin is rarely to be seen. It is, however, of a rich chocolate colour, some of the females being considerably lighter than others. Many of their ceremonies are falling into disuse; such as punching out the two foremost teeth on the right side of the upper jaw of the males, at the age of puberty, and the amputation of the little finger of the left hand of the females at the birth. These mutilations were never general, and it remains yet to be discovered for what they were practised. Scarifications are not in such high repute as formerly, though they seem to be considered ornamental. The principal scars are made by cutting two lines through the skin, parallel to each other, with a sharp

shell, and afterwards stripping off the intermediate skin. This painful operation is repeated, till the wounded flesh rises considerably above the surrounding skin, and it is then suffered to heal. These scars are not common among the women; yet some of them are marked on the arms, breasts, and back.

Making love among them is always prefaced by a beating, and is apparently received by the females as a matter of course, preparing them for the barbarity with which they are treated after becoming wives. Instances have occurred where enraged natives have speared their wives for an imaginary infidelity, and have left them to perish; nor, on such occasions, has the least concern been shown by any of the tribe.

Their pursuits are very confined, the chief employment of their lives being to procure sufficient sustenance. They seldom travel far, and fear to make inroads on the neighbouring tribes. Wherever the colonists establish themselves, the natives resign that part of the country. They occasionally visit the farmers on friendly terms, and are comparatively social: generally speaking, the natives have lost much of their savage ferocity; many of them speak English well, as far as the use of monosyllables will permit; yet it should be remarked, that, since the establishment of the colony, no change has taken place, either in their means of obtaining food, or of adding in the least to their comforts. So much do they abhor restraint, that nothing can incite them to habits of industry: no reward can induce them to prefer domestic enjoyment to roving in their native woods and wilds. They can be haughty, and abject, alternately; their partiality to bread prompts them to become



mendicants; but their pride will permit them to witness the craving of their hungry children, rather than bruise the corn, which may have been given to them. This indolence is equalled only by their carelessness; at night they will supplicate for a blanket, or a covering of any description, and disregard it immediately the sun has risen. They possess great taciturnity, but are excellent mimicks; even the peculiarities of the leading men in the colony are, among them, subjects of mirth and derision. The idea of their being the original possessors of the country has, long since, ceased to be acted upon; yet that they retain a remembrance of it, the following anecdote will place in a light tolerably clear: A respectable settler, in the neighbourhood of Parramatta, early one morning observed a chief, of the name of Harry, and several of his tribe, passing with their fire rather too near his stacks of corn; the settler went to them, and remonstrated on the impropriety, saying, the fire might easily be communicated to the loose straw, thence to the stacks; and, however unintentionally, cause the destruction of his property. The chief calmly replied, “ You know we must have our fire; the country is *ours*, *you* must take care of your corn.”





SMOKING OUT THE OPOSSUM.



## SMOKING OUT THE OPOSSUM, &c.

THE Opossum, Kangaroo Rat, Flying Squirrel, and various other animals, which inhabit the woods, frequent the hollows of decayed trees. As soon as such a tree is discovered, the natives commence an attack with the most certain means of success; one of the party ascends the tree to the upper outlet, at which the animals could escape, and there waits, with his club raised, while others below apply burning reeds, or dried grass, to the lower opening; by which the hollow of the tree becomes so filled with smoke, as to render it untenable to the inhabitants, and they are dispatched in their attempt to escape. Natives, who live in the woods, are often driven to harder extremities than those who inhabit the coast, or the borders of rivers, notwithstanding there are such varieties of animals which furnish excellent food; for, except in the method by smoking, they are taken with great difficulty. The disappointed hunters are frequently compelled to substitute a species of worm, or grub, found in the body of the dwarf gum tree; or to content themselves with yams, fern root, or even berries, so wretched and uncertain is their means of subsistence.

## HUNTING THE KANGAROO.

THE Kangaroo is found in great plenty on the S. and S. W. side of New Holland, and in the inland parts of the colony. They have been known to weigh one hundred and a half, affording to the native hunters a sumptuous repast, when they are fortunate enough to take one. The Kangaroo feeds on vegetable productions, and is discovered lurking in the high grass ; but so remarkably timid, that the natives find great difficulty in approaching near enough to throw a spear with effect. The animal is surprisingly powerful in the hind quarters ; it is enabled to spring twenty, or even thirty feet forwards, and over bushes ten feet high. It can lash its tail with such force, as to drive the native dog from the pursuit of it. The shortness of the fore legs renders them useless in running ; indeed, they appear to be used only to convey food to the mouth.

The natives have no idea of providing for the morrow ; eating at every opportunity, as long as there remains any thing to eat, and then stretching themselves in the sun to sleep, where they remain until hunger, or some other cause, calls them again into action.





HUNTING THE KANGAROO.









THROWING THE SPEAR.

## THROWING THE SPEAR.

THE Spear, which affords the chief amusement, as well as the means of defence, to the natives of New South Wales, is made from the yellow gum plant, which grows in a low tuft, with long grassy leaves, from the centre of which shoots up a stem, twelve or fourteen feet in height, and admirably adapted to the use to which it is appropriated. The natives are choice in the selection of these stems, and careful in the preparation, polishing, and attaching the barbs. Some of their Spears are armed, seven or eight inches from the point, with several bits of sharp stone, shell, or bone, which render them very formidable weapons ; and, so particular are the owners in executing this part, that the Spear can be recognized even among the neighbouring tribes. Their expertness is truly surprising ; they rarely fail to hit a mark at fifty or sixty yards. The Spear is impelled with greater velocity by the use of a throwing-stick, having the end a little hooked, to fit a hollow formed at the base of the Spear. This stick is held firm in the right hand, the finger and thumb supporting the Spear in a line above it ; the left hand directs the proper elevation ; and, as the aim is instantaneously taken, it rushes like lightning on its object. Each variety of Spear has its name, from those which are pointed only to those with a number of barbs. Birds, the beauty of whose plumage is no protection to them against the hungry native, occasionally furnish out a poor repast.

## CLIMBING TREES.

THE blue gum tree, in the branches of which the opossum and flying squirrel frequently take refuge, will measure from forty to sixty feet in one smooth shaft, up which the natives mount with surprising agility, by means of notches cut in the bark. The first and second notches are cut as they stand on the ground; the rest as they ascend, at such distances from each other, that, when both feet are in the notches, the left foot is raised as high as the middle of the right thigh. When they are going to rise a step higher, the hatchet is held in the mouth, in order to have the use of both hands; and, while cutting the notch, the weight of the body rests on the ball of the great toe. The fingers of the left hand are also fixed in a notch, when the size of the tree does not admit of its being conveniently grasped. The branches being gained, the animals are taken, or driven from the tree, and speared by those below.

A branch of a species of fir is always carried by one of the party lighted, from which a fire is readily kindled. The animals, which may have been taken, are hastily roasted, or rather scorched, and eagerly devoured.

This fir stick possesses the property of retaining the fire, after having been lighted a great length of time.





CLIMBING TREES.











FISHING No. 2.





## FISHING.

CATCHING Fish with the hook and line is, generally, the employ of the females. The lines are manufactured from the tough inner bark or rind of various trees, which is beaten with a stone until it becomes fibrous. The finer strings are then twisted into strands, and the line, which usually consists of two strands, is made to any length. The hooks are made with infinite labour from the pearly part of shells, but not barbed. The canoes are constructed of bark, securely lashed at the extremities, and cemented with yellow rosin, which renders them perfectly water-tight. They have stretchers to regulate the width, and are sometimes large enough to contain four persons. The natives who inhabit the coast are excellent swimmers, and manage the canoe very dexterously. The men fish with the spear or fish-gig, which instrument can be increased, by joints, to any manageable length, that the depth of the water may require, and are armed with two, three, or four points, or prongs, each barbed with bits of shell or fish bone. In fine weather, it is usual for the natives to lie across the canoe, with their heads beneath the surface of the water, and the spear raised, in readiness to strike the Fish which may chance to glide within their reach; this they do with such certainty, as rarely to miss their aim. When a Fish is speared too large to be conveniently taken into the canoe, they proceed, with the greatest caution, to the shore, where the necessary assistance can be obtained. A heap of weed at one end of the canoe enables them to preserve their fire, even at sea.

## DANCE.

EXCEPT in the Kangaroo Dance, which is an imitation of the actions of that animal, the natives do not appear to be regulated by steps appropriate to any particular expression, but the activity of their motions seems rather the result of hilarity, and the singing is similarly produced. Their songs are commenced at the top of the voice, the modulations lowering as long as the breath will permit; the lungs are then inflated with considerable noise, the song continuing during the respiration, after which the voice rises again to its utmost height; and, with some variation of tone, again descends, and is repeated till the subject is ended. When a number of the natives are assembled, on some particular ceremonies, an individual will start from the circle, leaping, and bounding, and throwing his arms about, in a variety of antic positions, till he is completely tired; meanwhile others have been singing, and beating time with sticks; indeed, the hoarseness of the singer, and the fatigue of the dancer, seem to produce the concluding movement. On these occasions the natives ornament themselves with red and white clay, in stripes, on the forehead, circles round the eyes, waving or straight lines on the breasts and arms; and, at times, the figure to the waist will be covered with white. The fashion of these decorations is, doubtless, regulated by the taste of the individual, although some of them, when ornamented in a manner that must have required a considerable portion of their time and abilities, will look perfectly horrible. A principal ornament is a bone, or reed, thrust through the septum of the nose, which was humorously called, by Cook's sailors, their spritsail yard.



THE DANCE.











WARRIORS OF NEW S. WALES.

## WARRIORS.

THOUGH each of the different tribes of natives has its own chief, yet, on occasions of war, or rather of revenge, the party put themselves under the guidance of the most expert and daring individual, without regard to seniority or rank. They are equipped with their best spears and shields; they decorate, or rather disfigure, themselves, making their hair stiff and projecting with grease, and covering it with down, feathers, shells, &c. till they have the appearance of mops. The body they stripe with white or red clay across the breast and ribs, and with a line down the centre of each arm and leg, which gives them, at a distance, the appearance of so many skeletons. On their warlike expeditions, they practise the greatest cruelties, retaliating their injuries on the unoffending. They are also capable of the greatest dissimulation: standing with the appearance of being unarmed, while the spear is lying by their side, and moved with their feet as they alter their situation; but, on the slightest opportunity of advantage, it is raised by the toes to the hand, and thrown with the best effect. Indeed, the management of the spear and shield, and the dexterity in throwing the clubs, are their greatest acquirements. Agility, either in the attack or the defence, and the fortitude with which they endure sufferings of every description, appear to confer superiority, and to rank first among their concerns of life.

The shield is cut from the gum tree bark, or formed of solid wood, and hardened in the fire.



## TRIAL.

THE ideas of equity, or of justice, among the natives, appear to be extremely confused; although the shedding of blood is always followed by punishment, the party offending being compelled to expose his person to the spears of all who choose to throw at him. If he escape unhurt, he is permitted to mix again with the tribe, as though nothing had happened; but if any one should kill him on this occasion, he who did so, notwithstanding he was executing what the law seemed to demand, must be placed in a similar situation, and defend himself against a like fate.

Injury or insult, is invariably resented in the degree in which it was received; hence the selecting of wives, or rather the stealing of women, is well calculated to keep the natives in endless disputes. After a native has determined on taking a wife, which is generally from a different tribe, he observes the greatest secrecy; and stealing upon her when she is unprotected, he stupifies her with blows, drags her violently to a place of security within the precincts of his own tribe, and the marriage is consummated. This outrage is retaliated, in a similar act, by the relatives of the female on the first opportunity.

In their single combats the strictest attention to the point of honour is observed, and animosity ceases when satisfaction is obtained.



TRIAL.









REPOSE.



## REPOSE.

THE natives can hardly be said to have any fixed place of residence, although each family derives its name from some particular spot. They frequently repose in parties, occupying twelve or fourteen huts, each constructed of one piece of bark simply bent in the middle, and confined on the sides with pegs, forming an angular covering, little more than three feet in height and six in length. The natives invariably burn fires at the front of each hut throughout the night, for darkness is dreaded as the parent of horror; yet they sleep remarkably sound: on which account they are much attached to the English dog, as being their best guardian through the silent hours of rest. In fine weather they sleep wherever night chances to overtake them. In the rainy season they retire into cavities, or under projecting rocks, and occasionally heat the hollow, by burning such quantities of dried grass, that the warmth is retained until the morning. If accident deprive them of their fire, one of the party places between his knees a flat piece of wood, having a hollow in it fitted to the point of a stick, which he whirls with the palms of his hands as rapidly as possible, and is relieved by others until, by continued friction, a flame is produced. Their most extended expeditions are made within a circle, the diameter of which seldom exceeds twenty miles. The only cause for removal seems to be the hope of a better supply of food, although succeeding generations have passed away without their having

seen the opposite side of the mountain to that which they would call their home. With very few exceptions, they are superstitious, jealous, cunning, and revengeful; at the same time they are susceptible of sorrow and of friendship, and possess no small degree of true courage; and, though the general character of the natives of New South Wales is a compound of inconsistencies, there is no reason to despair of their becoming, at no very distant period, useful members of society.









